

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Retail Foods

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Report Highlights:

In the UK the retail grocery industry is concentrated with 72 percent market share in the hands of just four supermarket chains. The remainder is scattered over hundreds of outlets. This report overviews the characteristics of UK retail outlets and how best to place U.S. products in the UK market.

Post:

London

Author Defined:**SECTION I. MARKET SUMMARY****Overview**

The UK grocery sector is one of the most diverse and sophisticated in the world. The four leading supermarket chains compete fiercely for customers with an ever growing popularity of the discount chains.

The grocery sector continues to record the strongest growth in retailing in the UK driven by modern grocery retailers. Convenience stores, discounters and online grocery retailing are the formats which are seeing the strongest expansion, with major chains opening smaller stores in city and town center's whilst limiting the expansions of large-format outlets in out-of-town locations.

By 2020, the total value of the UK Grocery Market will exceed £200 bn with Convenience sales increasing from £37.7 bn to £50 bn; Discounter sales increasing from £12.8 bn to £25.2; On-line sales increasing from £8.1 bn to £17.2 bn. Click and Collect sales will continue to increase rapidly. Discounters will continue to be the fastest growing channel as both quality and value are recognized by consumers.

Food prices have decreased in recent years due to the success of the discounters and competition.

The UK is witnessing a remarkable shift in how and where the consumer chooses to buy their food.

Online grocery shopping is rapidly growing; the boom in sales of tablets and smart phones has meant more access to online shopping for those previously who have not had readily accessible access to computers.

The UK convenience sector (similar to 7/11 stores in the United States) is thriving as shoppers respond positively to the greater choice of high quality local stores helping them shop a little at a time but often. With all the major food retailers increasing their convenience store opening plans and symbol groups investing in their stores, it is anticipated that the convenience sector will represent almost a quarter of the grocery market by 2020.

Sales through larger format stores such as hypermarkets and superstores are expected to decline 3 percent over the next five years as consumers choose to shop in alternative places.

Winners in food and grocery in the next year will be those who remain customer focused, providing shoppers with solutions that make grocery shopping better value for money. It will be the supermarket with a combination of product quality, freshness and convenience alongside price who will win.

UK Grocery Retailing - Store Numbers and Sector Value

The UK grocery market was worth £177.5 billion (\$275.1 billion) in March 2015. This is an increase of 1.7 percent over 2014. Groceries account for 9 percent of total household spending in the UK, making it the third largest area of expenditure, following housing and transport. Food and grocery expenditures account for 51.3 pence in every £1.00 of retail spending (excluding restaurants). 21 pence in every £1.00 spent on food and grocery is spent in convenience stores.

There are 85,031 grocery stores in the UK. These are split into four sectors.

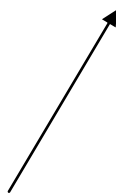
Supermarket Chains: Supermarkets have a sales area of 3,000-25,000 square feet and sell a broad range of grocery items. Superstores are defined as stores that have a sales area above 25,000 square feet, selling a broad range of grocery and non-food items.

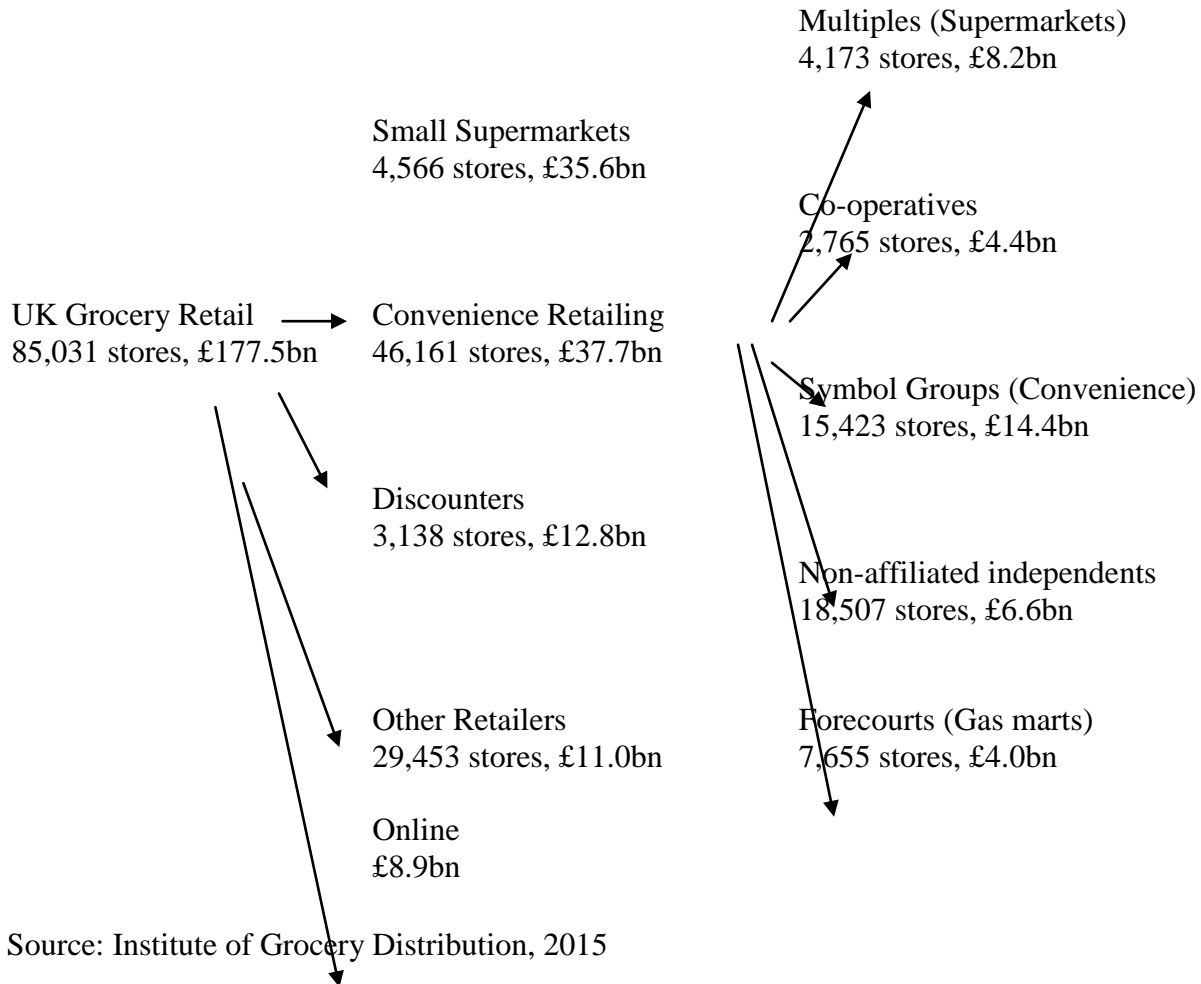
Convenience Stores: These stores have sales areas of less than 3,000 square feet, are open for long hours, and sell products from at least eight different grocery categories.

Traditional Retail and Developing Convenience Stores: These stores have sales areas of less than 3,000 square feet, and include news stands, green-grocers, liquor stores and gas stations.

Alternative Channels: This category includes a wide range of outlets such as internet or catalogue home shopping, farmers' markets, and other produce markets and vending machines.

Hypermarkets & Superstores
1713 stores, £71.7bn





Advantages and Challenges to U.S. Products in the UK Retail Sector

The UK is a sophisticated market that mirrors many trends in the U.S. retail sector. However, it can be surprisingly different from the United States and in-depth research and analysis should be carried out before attempting to export.

U.S. products face fierce competition in the British market. Not only is UK food production advanced, but other EU member states benefit from duty free access. However, there are opportunities for U.S. products in this competitive and challenging retail environment. The United States is the largest non-EU country supplier to the UK, but on average represents just 5-6 percent of food imports. Due to EU technical barriers, market access can sometimes prove a challenge for U.S. products.

Advantages	Challenges
Market dominated by a few retailers with strong market penetration. Sophisticated replenishment systems mean U.S. products can be widely distributed.	Supermarket chains demand significant volume and their concentration can make market access difficult initially. Trial listings must give results in a short time or product will be de-listed.

There are a large number of specialty importers, capable and interested in importing from the United States.	The UK has well-established brands for mainstream products. Brand-building and marketing costs are substantial.
The United States has a good brand image in the UK.	Strict (EU) import regulations and labeling/ingredient requirements.
The country is English-speaking and is therefore an easier gateway into the rest of Europe for U.S. exporters.	EU competitors do not pay import duty on goods to the UK. The United States generally pays 0-25 percent import duty, depending on the product.
The United States is a popular destination for UK tourists and familiarity with U.S. products is widespread.	Popularity of specialty products from many EU countries and U.S. competitors is high, e.g. French cheeses, Spanish citrus, Italian pasta, South African wines
Strong purchasing power, sophisticated consumers. In general, the UK tends to mirror U.S. retail market trends.	Consumer tastes differ in the UK. In general, there is not the same affinity for popcorn, peanut butter, and U.S. style chocolate.
Strong interest in innovative products including organic, health, specialty, and ethnic food categories.	

SECTION II. MARKET SEGMENTS

Supermarket Chains

This report gives a broad outline of the UK supermarket chains. A more detailed report entitled “UK Supermarket Chain Profiles” is available by emailing aglondon@fas.usda.gov.

Four supermarket chains dominate UK food retailing, accounting for 71.7 percent of the market. Tesco is the market leader, with 27.7 percent market share, followed by Sainsbury’s with 16.6 percent, Asda/Wal-Mart with 16.4 percent and Morrison’s with 10.8 percent. Other UK supermarket chains include The Coop, Waitrose, Iceland, Aldi, and Lidl.

Discounters

The discounters Aldi and Lidl continue to gain market share. In the 12 weeks ending November 8, 2015 the discounters combined market share reached 10 percent of the British grocery market for the first time. Consumers typically do their shopping in both a main supermarket and a discounter, therefore getting the best offers and prices. Aldi has done a particularly good job in conveying its competitive pricing message through it’s “Like brands only cheaper” campaigns.

The discounters show no signs of stopping and with plans to open hundreds more stores between them. All indications suggest they will noticeably widen their reach to the British population.

The main features of discount supermarket shopping are every day low cost; limited product ranges and

a focus on price. Stores are smaller and relatively uniform in size and layout. Stores range from 800 square meters (8,600 square feet) to 1,500 square meters (16,000 square feet). They carry predominately private label products; however, these are exclusive labels rather than store name.

The number of shoppers visiting Aldi has grown by 16 percent year on year. Almost a third of British households have visited an Aldi in the last three months.

Market Shares of the UK's Supermarket Chains

Retailer	Share %
Tesco	27.9
Sainsbury's	16.6
Asda/Wal-Mart	16.4
Morrison's	10.8
The Cooperative	6.3
Aldi	5.6
Waitrose	5.2
Lidl	4.4
Iceland	1.9
Others	2.8
Symbols & Independents	2.0

Source: Kantar Worldpanel, market share summary, 12 weeks to Nov 8, 2015.

In general, each retail chain focuses on specific market segments. For example, Tesco targets the middle market, providing both economy and up-scale products. Sainsbury's is pitched slightly up-market of Tesco, with Asda/Wal-Mart slightly down-market of Tesco. Morrison's and The Cooperative compete at much the same level as Asda/Wal-Mart. Waitrose, part of the John Lewis Partnership, is the most up-market of the leading chains. Iceland, Aldi and Lidl are all price-focused outlets.

The UK has one of the most advanced private label markets in the world (valued at around \$100 billion). The UK's major supermarket chains dominate the private label market and on average 47 percent of products in their stores are private label. Originally, private label goods were a copy of a branded product, but today they are often innovative. They give UK retailers the opportunity to diversify their product ranges and develop new revenue streams.

The extreme of UK private label grocery shopping can be seen by visiting a Marks and Spencer (M&S) food hall. Eighty-five percent of what M&S sells is own-label goods. Most M&S customers buy the majority of their food from other mainstream grocery retailers. They use M&S for special occasions, for convenience food such as ready-meals and as a top-up to their regular shop by buying a few luxury items. M&S consistently offer innovative, high quality and rigorously checked food.

The U.S. chain Whole Foods has its flagship store in London's Kensington High Street with the largest food retail space in central London, at 80,000 square feet. Whole Foods also own six smaller stores in London and two outside London in Glasgow and Cheltenham.

Partridges, part of the nine store Shepherd Foods Company, also deserves a mention for its continued dedication to stocking U.S. products. Partridges is essentially a large delicatessen celebrating both British and international foods.

Internet or Online Shopping

The value of the UK online grocery market has seen tremendous growth in recent years and in April 2015 was valued at £8.9bn. Online grocery sales are predicted to reach £17.2bn by 2020 as the internet becomes more widely used and relied upon by UK shoppers.

Online grocery shopping is now offered by UK supermarket chains – Tesco, Sainsbury, Asda, Waitrose and Morrisons. Outside of these suppliers, the market is mainly populated by a wide range of niche, specialized retailers, many of which offer products that are not always available in major supermarkets.

Online sales are being driven by three trends:

- Smart Shopping – shoppers using “smart” devices to buy their groceries.
- Convenient Collection – lockers at train stations for example
- Competitive Pricing – low cost delivery entices more people to use the service.

The UK online market is regarded as the most advanced in the world and online shopping for food is one of the main areas of growth. It is most popular with families and more affluent consumers whose spare time is very valuable and who prefer to pay for delivery rather than waste valuable time. There is very low uptake among people over the age of 65. This is probably due to the acceptance and use of technology, along with a preference for well established routines.

Some 20 percent of adults now do all or most of their grocery shopping online – confirming the UK’s leadership in online grocery retailing in Europe, yet still less than 5 percent of the total food retailers’ sector sales are online. That said, the UK’s young people are increasingly tech-savvy and the numbers of people with access to smartphones and tablets is increasing. As unemployment decreases, young people will have more disposable income and, as they are spending more time online, it is also likely that they will also spend a higher proportion of their money online.

More and more UK consumers are turning their backs on shopping in stores, opting to do their grocery shopping online in the comfort of their home and office. From their computers, they are able to get the same products – fresh produce, meat, dry goods, etc. – delivered to their home within a one-hour time window for a small delivery charge of only a few pounds or free at certain order levels? All of the main grocery chains in the UK offer home delivery.

The highest number of users of internet shopping is located in Scotland, followed by East Anglia and the Midlands. These are all rural areas. London also has a large number of internet shoppers due to long working hours and numbers who do not own a car.

Eighty percent of UK households now have access to the internet.

Click and Collect

With the increasing popularity of online retailing, supermarkets and other retailers introduced Click and Collect which has become hugely popular and is rapidly growing.

Click-and-Collect is a concept which brings together the benefits of online retailing with the advantages of maintaining a store-based retailing presence. Through these services, customers are able to access a vast catalogue of products which often cannot be stocked by even the largest outlets from the comfort of their home, purchase the items online and then collect the items from a store within easy reach. In the majority of cases, this service is free, making it cheaper than home delivery. Asda and Tesco have taken the extra step of offering Click and Collect at certain underground and train stations. They position store vans near the stations at certain hours for people to collect their products. The surge in Click and Collect is expected to grow significantly in the next few years.

About 26 percent of consumers regularly use Click and Collect for grocery shopping. Most consumers are using Click and Collect for other types of shopping. This service is especially popular at Christmas time. Over two thirds of UK consumers have used Click and Collect at least once compared with just 9 percent in the United States. In the UK Click and Collect is currently used the most by 18-34 year olds, families and full time workers.

Convenience Stores or the “C-Sector”

This report gives a broad outline of UK retail outlets. A more detailed report entitled “Key UK Retail Outlets” can be obtained by emailing aglondon@fas.usda.gov.

The UK’s convenience store market is highly fragmented, with a large number of retail operators. Store operators may be divided into several types:

Co-operative - UK food co-operatives are moving away from their traditional supermarket-type operations and towards convenience retailing. The largest co-op is The Cooperative Group (1,836 stores), followed by Southern (188 stores) and Mid Counties (181 stores).

Gas Stations - The largest players in the UK gas station market are Shell (777 stores), Esso (407 stores) and BP (307 stores). The UK supermarket chains are also key players in this market too. Tesco has 504 gas station stores, Asda/Wal-Mart has 261, Morrison’s has 336 and Sainsbury’s has 299. In total, there are 8,749 gas stations operating in the UK. Collaborative agreements between supermarket chains and gasoline retailers have resulted in joint sites, for example, Tesco Express stores operate at Esso gas stations and M&S Simply food stores operate at BP Connect gas stations.

Convenience Outlets at Supermarkets - Tesco also dominates the convenience multiple sector with 2,347 Tesco Express and One Stop type stores. Sainsbury’s, Asda, Morrison’s and Waitrose have followed Tesco into the convenience multiple market with their Local stores. In fact, supermarket chains now own 50 percent of the UK’s convenience multiples. Other key players are Martin McColl, the Simply Food format of Marks & Spencer, Whistlestop (SSP), and Checkers Express.

Symbol (Convenience) Groups and Franchises - In order to protect against the advance of the supermarket chains in the convenience sector, the number of convenience stores affiliated with a symbol group is growing rapidly. Symbol and buying groups offer small retailers a range of benefits including strong marketing and branding, wider product ranges, and more sophisticated supply chain systems. Major players in this sector are Premier/Booker (3,139 stores), Spar UK (2,330 stores), Musgrove (1,969 stores), Landmark (1,975 stores) and Costcutter (2,625 stores)

Non-Affiliated Independent - There are 18,507 unbranded independent grocery retailers in the UK. Independent store numbers are in decline, down 0.7 percent on 2014. As store standards continue to improve in the convenience sector, competition is intensifying. This is resulting in a number of independent retailers either leaving the sector or affiliating with a symbol operation.

Traditional Retail and Developing Convenience Stores - This retail sector encompasses small chains of specialist Confectionery, Tobacco and Newsagents (CTNs), specialist grocers, package liquor stores (off-licenses), and food specialists. There are also a large number of independent specialists, with just one or a very small number of stores. Below are the key players in each category, and their number of UK stores.

MULTIPLES (10+ STORES)				INDEPENDENT
Specialist CTNs	Specialist Grocers	Specialist Off-License	Food Specialists	Specialists (1 or more stores)
Martins, McCool (516)	Poundland (534)	Bargain Booze (463)	Greggs Bakers (1,650)	CTNs (2,385)
Rippleglen, Supercigs/ Supernews (99)	B&M Retail (417)	Majestic Wine Warehouses (211)	Holland & Barrett Health Food (762)	Off-Licences (2,024)
Aleef (15)	PoundStrecher (409)	Whittall's Wine EFB Retail (88)	Thorntons Chocolate (424)	Forecourts/ Gas Marts (3,808)
		Wine Mark (77)	Whittard (55)	Food Specialists:

	Wilko (375)			Greengrocers (1,802) Butchers (6,070) Fishmongers (1,015) Bakers (5,276) Farm shops (3,511) Others (3,187)
	TJ Morris (370)	G101 Off Sales (45)		

Source: The Grocer, Retail Structure - May 2015

In addition to the above retail avenues, department store “food halls” and delicatessens present opportunities for listings of U.S. products. London-based department stores such as Harvey Nichols and Selfridges have expanded to other major UK cities - including Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. Other notable department stores stocking U.S. products are Fortnum and Mason and Harrods. Key London delicatessens for U.S. products include Partridges in Kensington – www.partridges.co.uk , and Panzers in St. John’s Wood – www.panzers.co.uk

Other Retailers/Alternative Channels

The UK has other outlets for U.S. products such as mail/internet order, farmers’ markets and other produce markets, as well as machine vending.

Examples of these retail sales avenues are:

Shelf-stable grocery products www.skyco.uk.com , www.lakelandlimited.co.uk , www.melburyandappleton.co.uk and www.americansweets.co.uk
Organic fruit and vegetable box scheme www.abelandcole.co.uk;
Farmers’ markets www.localfoods.org.uk
UK’s largest fresh produce market www.newcoventgardenmarket.com; and
Automatic Vending Association www.ava-vending.co.uk.

SECTION III. ROAD MAP FOR MARKET ENTRY

Importers are key to doing business in the UK. Food importing is a specialized business, and an importer plays a pivotal role in navigating the hurdles of UK/EU food law. It is not impossible to supply UK retailers direct. However, there are few instances where that is a viable option. A UK importer or UK sales agent or broker is usually critical.

Importers normally carry a whole inventory of products. Many importers of non-frozen and chilled foods have in-house distribution networks and warehousing facilities, while smaller importers contract out. Many fresh produce importers have controlled atmosphere warehousing facilities and almost all importers of frozen and chilled foods contract out to specialized storage, handling and distribution

companies.

The terms and length of association between the U.S. company and the foreign importer are normally established by contract.

Some of the largest importers will only consider a product if it has large volume potential in the UK supermarket chains and is backed by substantial marketing and financial support. Others specialize entirely in independent grocer or food service distribution. Costs vary widely, too. Some importers may ask for a start-up fee, some are commission-only agents, and others may seek a fixed fee that switches to commission when sales reach a target level. A full brokerage rate may range anywhere between 17 and 25 percent.

Marketing costs from FOB level to retail may include some or all of the following: sea/air freight costs; insurance costs; import duty/value added tax/excise duty (if applicable); customs entry and clearance; handling charge to importer (can be a small charge deducted from wholesale price); packaging and labeling; overheads, wastage and shrinkage allowance; and mark-up by supermarket retailer (35-70 percent).

Large U.S. companies with substantial financial backing may be able to work with an importer to supply the UK supermarket chains immediately upon market entry. For small/medium sized U.S. companies, it is normal to work with an importer to gain product listings in department store food halls, delicatessens and independent retailers first. Once a sales volume and track record has been established, it is then possible for the importer to attempt listings in smaller retail chains, with a view to ultimately supplying the four key supermarket chains.

In choosing a UK importer, it is essential to take in to account the retail outlets that they currently supply. A U.S. exporter needs to understand a UK importer's distribution capacity, and ensure that the UK importer can supply the retail outlets that best fit the appropriate UK consumer base.

Market entry to the UK/EU requires substantial homework on the part of the U.S. exporting company to ensure that all import regulations and labeling laws are met. These are covered in the Food and Agricultural Importer Regulations (FAIRS) Report, available by emailing: aglondon@fas.usda.gov.

SECTION IV. COMPETITION

In the last decade, the UK consumer's appetite has grown for "healthy", convenient, and ethnic foods. There is an increasing demand for quick meal solutions, such as chilled ready meals or ingredients, and single snack portions. As a result, the UK domestic food manufacturing industry is sophisticated and advanced. UK new product development teams create innovative copies of international dishes and ready meals. If a U.S. product has been particularly successful in the UK, it is likely that a manufacturing site will be placed in the UK or EU.

The EU is the main competitor for U.S. consumer-orientated food. EU food exporters have relatively low transportation costs and fast delivery times. Their products do not face import duties, nor do they face major ingredient or labeling changes. Products are sourced mainly from the Netherlands, France,

Ireland, Denmark, Germany, Italy and Spain. Fruits and vegetables primarily come from the EU.

The United States is the largest non-EU supplier to the UK, with around 6 percent of all UK food and drink imports. New Zealand, Brazil, South Africa and Canada are some of the other top non-EU suppliers.

SECTION V. BEST PRODUCT PROSPECTS

U.S. products which do well in the UK are snack foods, fresh and dried fruit, nuts, vegetables, seafood, cereal products, cooking sauces, salad dressings, confectionery, dips and salsas, frozen foods, wine and beer, and food ingredients.

The UK Government is increasingly promoting healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. There are opportunities for U.S. products that can be marketed as natural, wholesome, and healthy. Within this category, organic products are also good prospects provided they comply with EU/UK organic regulations.

Convenience (semi-prepared) foods are estimated to account for around 50 percent of household food expenditures. This trend continues to be a major driving force in the UK food and beverage industry.

Best High Value Product Prospects for the UK Market

Product Category	Total UK Imports 2014 (\$ million)	UK Imports From U.S. 2014 (\$ million)	Average Annual U.S. Import Growth (last 5 yrs)	U.S. Import Tariff Rate	Key Constraints to Market Development	Market Attractiveness for USA
Fish and Seafood HS: 03	2,917	87.9	+88%	0-22%	Highly fragmented market, domestic shortfall.	U.S. #1 canned salmon supplier, developing interest in other products and species

Chocolate confectionery HS: 1806	2,224	30.3	+92%	8-27%	Domestic & EU competition, low acceptance of American chocolate taste	British eat more chocolate than any other nationality.
Vegetables & Fruit prepared in Vinegar HS:2001	174.5	0.9	+133%	0-16%	Competition from Turkey, Netherlands and India	Food has long shelf life
Preserved fruit & nuts HS: 2008	640.9	31.6	+69%	7-27%	Competition from EU, Thailand & South Africa	U.S. nut butters perceived as high quality, exotic preserved fruits of interest for gift/specialty trade
Fruit & Vegetable Juice HS: 2009	1,036	9.5	-9%	16-23%	Competition from EU and Brazil	High focus on healthy living in UK. Juices now more popular than carbonated drinks
Sauces, Condiments, Seasonings HS: 2103	898.6	28.8	+3%	0-10%	Australia starting to enter the market	UK wants authentic tex-mex, BBQ sauces, marinades & salad dressings
Soft drinks HS: 2202	1,227	7.4	-28%	0-10%	Domestic & EU competition, strong brands, market reaching saturation	New U.S. concepts in beverages always attractive, e.g. functional drinks
Beer HS: 2203	692.5	16.8	+329%	0%	Domestic & EU competition, major brewers located in EU	U.S. micro-brew beers, generally unique beers with a story. They are attractive to a

						niche audience
Wine HS: 2204	5,060.9	237.6	+44%	18- 25%	Competition from EU, Australia, Latin America & S. Africa. Figure shows a minus due to wine being shipped to Italy and then the UK.	UK #1 export market for U.S. wine, California wine has 16% market share, other parts of U.S. should benefit in future

Source: GTIS

SECTION VI. POST CONTACT AND FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions or comments regarding this report, require a listing of UK importers or need any other assistance exporting to the United Kingdom, please contact the USDA office in London.

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Further information on the UK retail grocery sector is available from the British Retail Consortium or the Institute of Grocery Distribution.

British Retail Consortium (BRC)

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Website: www.brc.org.uk

The British Retail Consortium is the lead trade association representing the whole range of retailers from large multiples and department stores through to independents.

Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD)

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The IGD is the UK Trade association for information about the food and grocery chain. One service offered is the Retail Analysis - www.igd.com/analysis. This covers more than 130 retailers in 50+ countries. Retail Analysis provides an understanding of retailer strategies, as well as the latest news in this sector.

NOTE: This report uses the following exchange rate:
US\$ 1.6 = 1 British Pound - £